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ABSTRACT

This profile, in outline form, of the English language teaching situation in the Gambia discusses the role of English within Gambian society and within the educational system. The status of English as the only official language is noted, and its use as medium of instruction at the primary, secondary and teacher-training levels is examined. The composition of the teaching cadre at all levels is discussed, as well as teaching materials, British support for English instruction and British materials in use. A general statement is provided on English literacy and the advisability and possibilities of introducing native language instruction. An appendix provides statistical background to the profile. (AMH)

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ENGLISH-TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING PROFILE June 1978

Country: THE GAMBIA

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

1. The Role of English

1.1 English is the language of Government, Parliament, Commerce and Education. It is the only official language. The Government is the only sizeable employer outside farming. Therefore most Government employees have some knowledge of English. Motivation to learn English is, in principle, high: The country is Anglophile; to speak English helps one to be a Gambian rather than a French-speaking Senegalese; English seems to be a means of escape from the land into the luxury of the city.

There is no resistance to English. Local languages - Mandinka, Olof, Fula, Serehuli and Jola - have no standardised orthography at present. Attempts are now being made to agree on one. A syllabus for local languages in Primary Schools has been drawn up and materials to support this are being designed. It is planned to introduce local languages as subjects in schools from September 1978 but there is no question of English being superseded in the foreseeable future.

1.2 English is used as the medium of instruction from the first year of Primary schooling - this is the official policy. In fact, local languages are used to a large extent in Primary One and Two and to some extent for the rest of Primary education. Secondary schooling is entirely in English. Tertiary education in the Gambia uses English. Since there is no University in the Gambia, all Higher Education is done abroad in English.

1.3 All official written and public oral communication is in English. All national bodies use English. However, there is 90% illiteracy in the Gambia and 90% of the people work in Agriculture; therefore much local (village/district/area) administration is done in local languages, with records kept in English.

2. English within the Educational System

2.1 Primary schooling starts (for 30% of age group) at age 8 and this is normally the first formal contact with English. There are a few pre-school groups in English in Banjul. The Marina International School starts in English at age 6.

2.2 Common Entrance is taken at end of Primary School and the top 40% go on to Secondary. A large component of this is some form of English - multiple choice and composition.

Secondary HS take West African Examinations Council 'O' and 'A' levels. UK based secondary school GCE's are available to non-Gambians.

2.3 Entry to Teacher Training College at Yundum has an English component but it is possible to get a teacher's certificate from Yundum while failing the English course. All HE and FE awards (about 80 CEFS or UKSCAAP are awarded to Gambians each year and these are the main vehicles

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of HE or FE) require a sound knowledge of English. (CEFS Fellows are given the Davies Test before going to UK). Most award holders do not have English at 'O' level.

2.4 Officially, all principals and headmasters are able to select their own text books. In practice, they follow the dictates of the Education Department which has the only large available stock. In the future as curriculum reform gathers momentum, all schools - and therefore the TTC - will only use books recommended by CDC.

2.5 There is no established inspectorial system of schools and colleges. The Education Department, CDC staff and training college staff, and advisers carry out random uncoordinated inspection of teachers and schools. The REOs are responsible for inspecting schools in their regions. The present Acting Director of Education is setting up a more formal inspection system as from September 1978.

2.6 Virtually no ESP except courses run by ACE for:

a. medical English to Gambia Nursing School trainees

b. intonation and pronunciation course to Radio Gambia announcers.

2.7 None

2.8 Schools Broadcasting Service established by Radio Gambia in June 1977. Pilot project for Primary One classes (16 schools) with content based on CDC English and Social Studies syllabuses, launched in January 1978.

No correspondence courses by radio or other forms of distance teaching at present functioning. A second channel opening in early 1979 for schools and rural broadcasting will provide some opportunity for increasing distance English teaching, and teacher training.

3. Teachers of English

3.1 The total output from Yundum TTC (all generalist Primary School teachers) is 50 p.a. This is sufficient to meet present demand and, since no large expansion of Primary Schooling is possible in the near future, it should satisfy future demand also.

At present 45% of the teaching cadre are unqualified. Yundum TTC has plans for the upgrading of these and forecasts that, by 1986, there will be no unqualified teachers at Primary School level.

Secondary School teacher training is tentatively planned to start at the new Gambian College in 1980. At present English teachers in Secondary Schools are:

(i) expatriates - mainly missionaries or VSO/Peace Corps

(ii) Gambians who have been trained abroad

(iii) Gambians who have been trained as Primary teachers

(iv) untrained Gambians who have completed 4 years of Secondary Education.

3.2 There are:

(i) no expatriate English teachers at Primary level

(ii) no expatriate English teachers in Secondary Technical

(iii) 6 of the 7 HS have expatriate headmasters. 3 HS have expatriate British/Irish/US English teachers

(iv) at Yundum TTC, 1 OSAS English Head of Department.

3.3 Additional British support could be in the form of 1 KELT at Yundum TTC for secondary training and 1 KELT at CDC for curriculum reform work.

3.4 (see 3 above).

Vacation in-service courses have been mainly concerned with Primary School curriculum reform in all subjects, English being one. The courses are for about 40 teachers and these are introduced to the new syllabuses, materials and methods. (BC support given to the 1977 course in the form of 4 consultants, 1 for English). Other courses are held in the holidays or weekends at irregular intervals by REOs.

ACE has run seminars at ETIC in Banjul on a fortnightly basis for teachers at all levels on a wide variety of English teaching areas.

3.5 The Gambia Association of Teachers of English (GATE) was moribund when ACE arrived (Sept 1976). Attempts to resuscitate were made in January 1977 - a general meeting of teachers at which a constitution agreed, aims decided upon and new Committee elected. GATE has not had a meeting since that date and has no influence on English teaching policy or English testing and examinations.

4. Materials Support

4.1 Materials of all sorts are in desperately short supply except for those in Secondary High Schools and a few Primary Schools in Banjul. It is not unusual to go to schools up-country where there are practically no text books and no other teaching materials.

A recent random survey of 5 schools in the CDC pilot project by ACE revealed that the Education Dept issued on average:

0.6 of a chair per child

0.6 of a desk per child

0.5 of an exercise book per child per term for all subjects

0.2 of a pencil per term per child for all subjects

0.6 of a box of chalk per class per term for all subjects

In addition, some classes are without blackboards, desks or chairs at all. A minimum amount of other material for teaching is issued.

4.2 A distinction has to be made between schools in Banjul and those up-country. Most Banjul schools have better materials and facilities because they are better staffed, have more active, influential and richer parents and are nearer the centre of power. Parents make up for deficits in the schools from their own pockets. Up-country, there is no money and little literacy. Parents' contributions are of necessity confined to putting up buildings, digging wells and toilets etc.

Secondary Technical schools are generally badly off, having no syllabuses, untrained staff and little in the way of books or equipment.

4.3 Extremely limited (see 4 and 4.1 above)

4.4 Generally there is absolute insufficiency.

The hopeful sign is that CDC is now producing materials locally for Primary schools (and will do so later for Secondary schools) in the pilot project.

Materials produced locally by the English panel at CDC (ACE chairman) and printed by Government Printers are:

(i) Primary One:

Syllabus
Teachers Handbook
Handwriting Book
Word Cards
Wall Charts
Picture Cards
Supplementary Readers

(ii) Primary Two:

Syllabus
Teachers Handbook
Poetry Book
Word Cards
Sentence Cards
Supplementary Readers

In Pilot schools, in addition, there are

(i) Primary One:

Primary English for the Gambia (Longmans) pupils 1
Teachers Book for PEG 1
Ocean Readers - Introductory (supplied by ACE)
Book 1 (supplied by ACE)

(ii) Primary Two:

PEG 2 pupils
PEG 2 teachers
Ocean Readers 2 (supplied by ACE)

(Ocean Readers were obtained by my predecessor and have been issued to most Primary Schools. They are sometimes the only books in the schools)

There is no real possibility of cassettes or films being used on a large scale because of lack of equipment and power.

'Teaching Observed' films have been used as the basis of lectures by ACE at Yundum TTC.

Radio Gambia has supplied radios to pilot schools, together with teachers notes and wallcharts, for use with their programmes (see 2.8 above).

5. English outside the educational system

5.1 None (but see 9.2 below).

6. British support for the teaching of English

6.1 1 ACE in English Teaching Information Centre, Banjul. This centre set up in BHC building and rented by ODM from BHC. It consists of a flat of three rooms - a general office + library; a book store; a classroom. The BHC will vacate this building August 1978. ACE has applied to National Investment Board to keep the Centre.

6.2 1 OSAS at Yundum TTC.

2 missionaries + 1 Peace Corps at Sec HS

6.3 Main areas of activity.

6.3.1 ACE

a. lecturing at Yundum TTC
b. working at CDC (see 4.3 above)
c. inspection of schools
d. advice to Dept of Education
e. preparing programmes for Radio Gambia on ELT
f. in-service courses run by CDC and Education Dept
g. seminars at ETIC
h. running ETIC
i. producing Newsletter
j. National Library and Schools Library service
k. ESP courses
l. English testing for HE & FE candidates.

6.3.2 OSAS

a. Head, English Dept, Yundum TTC
b. English panel CDC
c. in-service courses run by CDC and Education Dept

6.3.3 High School teachers - direct teaching to 'O' and 'A' level.

6.4 None.

6.5 British Materials Used

6.5.1 Primary:

a. Ocean Readers (Jersey Overseas Aid)

b. Straight for English (Longmans) *

c. Primary English for the Gambia (Longmans) *

d. Primary English for Sierra Leone (Longmans) *

6.5.2 Secondary:

a. Evans Secondary Course for Africa

b. English 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 - O'Malley

c. Living English Structure - Stannard Allen

d. Living English Speech - Stannard Allen

e. Effective English - Montgomery

f. Organised English - Moody

6.5.3 For teachers: many modern texts on all aspects of English teaching are available for use at ETIC, CDC, National Library and Yundum TTC. It is hoped to establish additional teachers' libraries in the new Teachers Centres to be built using World Bank funds in the next 4 years.

6.5.4 The following taped and cassetted courses are available for use by teachers from ETIC:

English Language Units

Success with English

A Modern Course in Business English

Mackins Course in Spoken English

The English we Use

Talk English

Varieties of English

New Concept English

Ship or Sheep

Active Intonation

Speaking English

English Examined

Stress Time

Get your tenses right

Clusters

Link-up

Intonation (Halliday)

* These recommended but by no means in general use.

6.5.5 An ELBS exhibition will be held at the National Library in July 1978.

Practically all the books used throughout the system for ELT work are of English publication.

6.6 Direct teaching by Council staff

ACE

a. lectures at Yundum TTC

b. 6 month course to 6 radio announcers twice weekly

c. 2 x 3 months course to 20 Nursing trainees once weekly

d. Fortnightly seminars on Saturday mornings. Average attendance 15.

7. American support to ELT

7.1 None.

8. Current research and bibliography

8.1 None.

9. General Statement

9.1 The place of English as the only official language is firmly established and the situation is likely to remain the same for the foreseeable future. ACE recommended (January 1977) that local languages be used for the first three years of Primary Education on the grounds that this was pedagogically more desirable and anyhow it reflected what happened in most schools. This recommendation was not acted upon because:

a. it was counter to stated government policy

b. there is no standardised orthography for local languages

c. there are no materials in the local languages

d. there is very little money for the design and development of materials in local languages

e. English is more useful.

9.2 Though English is the medium of instruction throughout and the official language, it is not understood by the majority of the population. This is because:

a. the majority of the population is illiterate and has never been to school

b. the standard of Primary School teachers and teaching is very low

c. there is a severe shortage of necessary materials in schools

d. English is not used outside the classroom even, generally, in privileged homes

e. English is non-functional for the majority of the population who are in farming.

9.3 Over the next 5-10 years, there will be a slow progress towards more use of the local language in education.

9.2 Several small scale adult literacy programmes have been in progress over the past 20 years using English as the medium of instruction. In the rural areas, this effort has largely been unsuccessful. In the urban areas, where the concentration has been on teaching English for trades, there has been a limited degree of success.

9.3 A pilot scheme for 6 villages in numeracy and literacy in Madinka was initiated by the National Literacy Advisory Committee (ACE a founder member). This has been enthusiastically received by the participants. The programme is designed for 2 x 6 month periods during the slack season of the farming calendar (the dry season). Originally the villagers wanted to be literate in English not in their mother tongue, Mandinka. It has been agreed that if they first become literate in Mandinka, they can then move on to an English course, should they still desire to do so.

9.4 ACE publishes an ELT Newsletter every 6-8 weeks. This deals with English teaching problems, suggestions for better teaching, developments at CDC and matters of general educational interest. It is distributed to all schools, colleges and many government departments and has been well-received.

BACKGROUND TO PROFILE

1. Basic Data

1.1 General:

Land area	4,000 sq miles
Population (1975)	519,000
% urban	15
Population growth pa	2.8%

2. Education:

2.1 Enrolment (1976/77)

	Total No	Female	Enrolment ratio
Primary	25,525	32%	33% (7-12 yrs)
Secondary	6,824	30%	15% (13-17 yrs)
(Secondary Tech)	(4,625)		
(Secondary High)	(2,199)		
Tertiary	500		3%
(Technical/Vocational)	(256)	(23%)	
(Health Training)	(77)	(65%)	
(Teacher Training)	(129)	(36%)	
(Agricultural Training)	(38)		

2.2 Institutions + Student Population

Management	Primary		Sec Tech		Sec HS		Post Sec	
	No	Pop	No	Pop	No	Pop	No	Pop
government	77	18,503	11	3,292	1	370	2	439
local agreement	5	3,001	1	315				
others	17	4,021	4	1,018	6	1,829	1	54
Totals	99	25,525	16	4,625	7	2,199	3	493 *

* There is ONE Teacher Training College - Yundum TTC

2.3 Teachers

	Number	Female	Qualified	Teacher/pupil ratio
primary	829	34%	54%	31:1
secondary	373	24%	67%	18.1
Tech/vocation	23	9%	80%	11:1
teacher training	14	16%	73%	9:1

2.4 Administration The Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture is responsible for the formulation and implementation of educational policy as laid down in the Ten Year (1976-86) Education Policy document.

The Director of Education, Head of the Department of Education, is the professional head of the Ministry and is responsible for the day to day implementation of policy. He is also responsible for teacher training and Secondary High Schools. His Assistant Director is resonsible for Secondary Technical Schools and Primary Schools.

There is a Curriculum Development Centre, recently established within the Ministry, responsible for carrying out curriculum reform at all levels of the educational system starting with the Primary level (at present at Primary 2). There are 4 educational administrative regions:

Banjul/Kombo St Mary	24 primary, 5ST, 5SH, 1 tertiary
Western	27 primary, 4ST, 1SH, 2 tertiary
Lower River/North Bank	31 primary, 4ST - -
MacCarthy Island/Upper River	24 primary, 3ST, 1SH -

Each region is headed by a Regional Education Officer (REO) who is directly responsible to the Director.

Under the REO, are professional staff designated Education Officers (EO) and Assistant Education Officers (AEO). Some EOs and AEOs have responsibility for subject areas throughout the country.

With decentralisation, REOs are becoming increasingly important as suppliers of materials, school inspectors and course organisers.

2.5 Primary Education Up to this year (1978), primary education was from 6-12 years with the Common Entrance Examination at the end. From this year, pupils start at the age of 8 and go on to 14. For the majority, primary schooling is the only education they will get. There is a striking drop in enrolment away from the Banjul/Kombo area:

	Total %	Female %
Banjul	105	100
Kombo	73	62
Brikama (WD)	56	27
Mansakonko (NBD/LRD)	19	7
Kerewan (NBD/LRD)	24	10
Kutaur/Georgetown (MID)	19	11
Basse (MID/URD)	10	6
Total - The Gambia	35	23

The National Development Plan proposes to increase primary school provision especially in the rural areas but this is unlikely in the near future because of lack of buildings, lack of teachers and lack of money.

The quality of school buildings is poor; there is a lack of basic amenities; there is inadequate furniture; there is inadequate book and materials supply.

2.6 Secondary Education 40% of Primary School leavers go on to either a four year course at a Secondary Technical School or a five year course to WAEC 'O' level at a Secondary High School (in one case, Gambia HS, pupils

can do WAEC 'A' level). The seven Secondary HS are situated 6 in the Banjul/Kombo area and 1 in Georgetown, MID. This latter is the only boarding school in the country. The HS are relatively well-equipped and staffed.

Secondary Technical Schools have recently been renamed - they were called Junior Secondary Schools. Up to this time, the name is the only change and the curriculum is still a pale version of the academic one of the Secondary HS. Some World Bank inputs will give equipment, materials and training for staff for 4 of these schools within the next 4 years.

2.7 Tertiary Education

2.7.1 Teacher training: This is available at Yundum TTC and is for primary only. A three year course is given and this covers all subjects and is well established. The staff is rather less than 50% UK based. Practically no facilities exist for training teachers in specialist subjects. Up-grading for unqualified teachers is also carried on at Yundum. The College is residential.

2.7.2 Vocational training: the VTC in Banjul offers courses in a. Basic mechanical engineering, b. basic auto engineering, c. carpentry and joinery, d. masonry and bricklaying, e. welding and f. secretarial duties.

2.7.3 Nursing training: there is a Nursing School in Banjul, officially part of Yundum TTC but, in reality, run independent of it for most of the time.

2.8 Finance Education has been gradually increasing its share of total recurrent budget. In 1976/77,

the total budget was:	D44,311,000 (£11,077,000)
the education budget:	D 6,792,000 (£ 1,698,000)
%	15.3% (still low by African standards)

Out of this amount 78% is spent on salaries and only 2% on books and equipment. Costs per pupil are budgeted as D132.00 for Primary and D200.00 for ST.

(NB ALL FIGURES TAKEN FROM EDUCATION STATISTICS 1976/77)